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SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MW](#)
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH MONTENEGRIN PRESIDENT VUJANOVIC

REF: PODGORICA 54

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

1.(SBU) ON MARCH 6 CHARGE PAID A COURTESY CALL ON PRESIDENT FILIP VUJANOVIC. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR PAST AMERICAN ASSISTANCE, SAID MONTENEGRO WANTED TO BE A STRATEGIC PARTNER OF THE UNITED STATES, PLEDGED COOPERATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ORGANIZED CRIME, STATED MONTENEGRIN INTEREST IN RAPID CONCLUSION OF DEFENSE AGREEMENTS, REITERATED INTEREST IN US INVESTMENT AND EXPRESSED HOPE FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION TOT HE PROBLEM OF KOSOVO. END SUMMARY

2.(SBU) CHARGE REQUESTED A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AFTER ONE OF HIS SENIOR STAFF GENTLY SUGGESTED SHE DO SO. THE PRESIDENT BEGAN, AS APPARENTLY IS HIS HABIT, BY THANKING THE UNITED STATES FOR THE ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO MONTENEGRO OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS. HE TOLD THE CHARGE HE HAD CAREFULLY READ THE INSCR WHICH WAS SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE MEDIA ATTENTION. HE APPRECIATED THE FACT THAT IT WASN'T ALL NEGATIVE AND TOOK NOTE OF SOME MONTENEGRIN SUCCESSES IN CLOSING DOWN OFFSHORE COMPANIES AND ARRESTING MONEY LAUNDERERS. HE AGREED THAT MORE NEEDED TO BE DONE AND PRAISED THE ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY USG EXPERTS EMBEDDED IN VARIOUS GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES. MONTENEGRO WOULD WELCOME EXPERTS IN ALL AGENCIES ENGAGED IN COMBATING ORGANIZED CRIME. VUJANOVIC AGREED THAT THE PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION WAS HARMING MONTENEGROS REPUTATION AND THAT CONCERTED ACTION WOULD BE REQUIRED TO COUNTER THIS.

3.(SBU) TURNING TO THE ISSUE OF THE ECONOMY, VUJANOVIC SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS COMMITTED TO TRYING TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH AND COMPLIMENTED CHARGE ON HER RECENT VISIT TO PLEVIJA. HE LAMENTED THE ABSENCE OF US INVESTMENT, ASKED FOR THE EMBASSYS ASSISTANCE IN ENCOURAGING IT, BUT CONCLUDED THAT MONTENEGRO NEEDED TO DO A BETTER JOB OF MAKING ITS POTENTIAL AND OPPORTUNITIES KNOWN TO US INVESTORS. WITH OVER 500 MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN 2005, MONTENEGRO

WAS CLEARLY DOING A NUMBER OF THINGS RIGHT, BUT WAS STILL MISSING A KEY TARGET AUDIENCE. THE NEW AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON HAD BEEN TOLD HIS JOB WAS ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AS THE OTHER ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP WERE WORKING WELL.

4.(SBU) VUJANOVIC SAID MONTENEGRO HAD BENEFITED FROM A NUMBER VISITS BY HIGH-LEVEL DEFENSE OFFICIALS. HE CITED IN PARTICULAR THE SEPTEMBER VISIT OF THEN SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RUMSFELD, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS DELIVERING ON HIS THREE PROMISES: INVITATION TO MONTENEGRO TO JOIN PFP; ACCREDITING OF A DATT; LINKAGE WITH MAINE IN A STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD PERSONALLY REVIEWED THE DRAFT SOFA AGREEMENT AND HIS COMMENTS WOULD BE INCLUDED IN CONSOLIDATED GOM RESPONSE (SEE REF) HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE AGREEMENT COULD BE CONCLUDED SWIFTLY AND "...IN KEEPING WITH AMERICAN PRACTICE" SIGNED IN WASHINGTON.

CHARGE NOTED TO THE PRESIDENT'S SATISFACTION THAT THERE WOULD A DATT RESIDENT IN PODGORICA BY THE END OF SUMMER. SHE CONFIRMED THAT THINGS WERE MOVING FORWARD ON THE SOFA AND OBSERVED THAT THERE WAS NO SET PRACTICE FOR SIGNING CEREMONIES AND PROMISED TO WORK WITH THE GOM ON ARRANGEMENTS WHEN THE TIME CAME. ONCE THE SOFA WAS SIGNED AND DIPLOMATIC NOTES HAD BEEN EXCHANGED ON AN ARTICLE 98 AGREEMENT, THE US WOULD WANT TO INITIATE A NUMBER OF TRAINING PROGRAMS, INCLUDING ONE FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH TO MILITARY PERSONNEL. THE PRESIDENT WHOLE HEARTEDLY ENDORSED THIS IDEA.

5.(SBU) CHARGE RAISED THE ISSUE OF REGIONAL RELATIONS AND IN PARTICULAR KOSOVO. VUJANOVIC SAID AS THE SMALLEST OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLICS, MONTENEGRO WAS SEEN AS NON-THREATENING WHEN IT SOUGHT TO FOSTER GREATER REGIONAL COOPERATION. GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL NEIGHBORS WAS MONTENEGROS GOAL. EMBASSY HAD HEARD FROM A WELL PLACED SOURCE THAT VUJANOVIC PLANS OFFICIAL TRAVEL TO ZAGREB IN THE NEXT WEEK, BUT THE PRESIDENT MADE NO MENTION OF THIS. ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN THE REGION WAS, ACCORDING TO THE PRESIDENT, LOGICAL, GIVEN THE FORMER COMPLIMENTARY RELATIONSHIP OF THE CONSTITUENT YUGOSLAV REPUBLICS. THERE WERE STILL ISSUES SUCH AS PREVLAKA PENINSULA TO BE WORKED OUT WITH CROATIA. ON THE SUBJECT OF KOSOVO, MONTENEGRO WOULD NOT OFFER SUGGESTIONS OR TAKE A POSITION. IT HAS BEEN RIGHT AND PROPER TO INVITE CEKU TO PODGROICA IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR, JUST AS IT HAD BEEN RIGHT TO INVITE THE OTHER KOSOVAR MINISTERS, BUT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO BE MINDFUL OF BELGRADE'S REACTION TO THE CEKU VISIT AS WELL AS DOMESTIC REACTION. HE REGRETTED THAT IN THE IMMEDIATE POST MILOSOVIC PERIOD BOTH SIDES HAD LOST VALUABLE TIME BEING UNWILLING TO ENGAGE IN ANY DISCUSSION. THE INTERVENTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL

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COMMUNITY HAD BEEN REQUIRED AND WOULD CONTINUE TO BE REQUIRED TO FIND A SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENT IN KOSOVO WHICH ASSURED ADEQUATE PROTECTIONS FOR THE SERBS AND RETURN OF REFUGEES. HE WAS VERY CLEAR THAT KOSOVO'S FUTURE WAS ONLY AS A MULTI-ETHNIC STATE.

6.(SBU) COMMENT: THE MEETING, A COURTESY CALL, PROVIDED LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE. IT WAS INTERESTING THAT A MEMBER OF THE PRESIDENTS PERSONAL STAFF HAD SOUGHT CHARGE OUT AT A RECEPTION AND SUGGESTED SHE SEEK A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT. HE WAS RELAXED AND ENGAGING DURING THE HOUR LONG MEETING, HIS DEMEANOR CHANGING ONLY WHEN KOSOVO WAS RAISED. HE SPOKE IN SERBIAN WITH OCCASIONAL COMMENTS IN ENGLISH, BUT DID NOT REQUIRE TRANSLATION FROM THE ENGLISH. LIKE MANY MONTENEGRIN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HE SEEMS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT ATTRACTING US INVESTMENT. UNLIKE MANY OTHERS, HE SEEMS TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS A SELLING JOB TO DO.

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